

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE GED® TESTS

The tests of General Educational Development (GED Tests) were developed for returning World War II veterans in the 1940's to measure educational achievement equivalent to high school graduates. The tests have been widely used for adults without a high school diploma since the 1950s and the GED credential is widely accepted in lieu of a traditional high school diploma.

The GED Testing Service® (GEDTS) of the American Council on Education® (ACE) makes the GED Tests available. Each year, approximately 700,000 people take the GED Tests nationwide. About one in seven high school diplomas issued in the United States each year is based on passing the GED Tests.

The GED Tests are standardized and normed using a nationally representative sample of graduating seniors during the spring of their senior year. The passing standard is set so that those who pass the GED Tests perform as well as approximately 60 percent of graduating high school seniors.

What's on the GED Tests?

The GED Tests consist of five content areas that measure achievement in subject areas associated with a high school program of study:

1. Language Arts, Writing
2. Language Arts, Reading
3. Mathematics
4. Science
5. Social Studies

What the GED Tests Measure

Test	Content Areas	Items	Time Limit
Language Arts, Writing Part I Part II	Part I: Organization (15%); Sentence Structure (30%); Usage (30%); Mechanics (25%) Part II: Essay (direct writing exercise)	50 questions and an essay	2 hrs. (total): Part I - 75 min. Part II - 45 min.
Mathematics Part I (calculator) Part II	Number Operations and Number Sense (25%); Measurement and Geometry (25%); Data Analysis, Statistics and Probability (25%); Algebra, Functions and Patterns (25%)	Part I: 25 questions Part II: 25 questions	90 min. (total): Part I - 45 min. Part II - 45 min.
Science	Life Science (45%); Earth and Space Science (20%); Physical Science (Chemistry & Physics)(35%)	50 questions	80 min.
Social Studies	National History (25%); World History (15%); Economics (20%); Civics and Government (25%); Geography (15%)	50 questions	70 min.
Language Arts, Reading	Literary Texts—poetry, drama, prose (75%); Nonfiction Prose (25%)	40 questions	65 min.

Sample GED Questions

If an educator wants a sample of the items and content of the GED Tests, they should refer to the Official GED Practice Tests (OPT). The content of the OPT is like that of the official GED Tests. In fact, the items for the OPT are developed by GEDTS at the same time as the items on the official GED Tests.

Length of Tests

The actual test administration time is seven hours and five minutes. With time for the required test directions and breaks between the content areas, the tests take about eight and one half hours to administer.

Because of their length, the tests are often administered over two days. Some testing centers provide administration of all content areas in a single day because of examiner schedules and test-taker employment commitments.

Test Administration

The tests are administered in three blocks or sub-sessions: 1) Mathematics, 2) Language Arts, Writing and 3) Science, Social Studies and Language Arts, Reading.

Breaks may be taken between the content areas as allowed by the testing center. If a test-taker leaves the room during a test, the testing materials will be collected and scored as they were when the candidate left the room. No one may return to the same content area after leaving the room.

The Mathematics test is two parts, which must be administered together with no break. Part I allows the use of the approved GED calculator (Casio fx-260) provided by the testing center. At the end of Part I, the calculator and scratch paper are taken up and Part II and new scratch paper are provided. Once Part II is distributed, the test-taker may no longer use the calculator. The test-taker is allowed to keep both Part I and Part II of the Mathematics test until the end of the test.

The Language Arts, Writing test is two parts, which must be administered together with no break. The multiple choice questions are always administered before the essay. The essay topic is provided in writing to the test-taker before the timing of the test begins. If a test-taker does not pass the Language Arts, Writing test they must retake both the multiple choice and essay portion of the test. No part of the Language Arts, Writing test is administered separately and scores are not reported separately.

Science and Social Studies both have 50 items. Ten more minutes are allowed for the science test (80 minutes) than for the social studies test (70 minutes). If test-takers are not mindful of the time difference they sometimes run out of time during the social studies test.

The Language Arts, Reading test is the shortest content area test and is usually administered last. Please note that 75 percent of the items on this test are from literary texts.

The five tests are designed so that 90 percent of those taking the test will finish within the allotted time.

Retesting

Improved OPT scores must be submitted for any content area a test-taker wants to retake. Each GED content area may only be taken three times in a calendar year. Test-takers who have attained the minimum score in each content area, but do not have the required overall points before taking the GED Tests to achieve the overall points, may retake any OPT test.

GED Tests Cannot be Taken Online

GED Tests are currently available only as paper and pencil tests at Official GED Testing centers. GED credentials are only issued by states. Any entity that claims to offer a GED credential through any other means are not affiliated with GEDTS or ACE. Any credential offered through such means is of dubious value and may not be accepted by employers or postsecondary institutions.
